

# Bombay Natural History Society

Founded 1883

Ref. 2659/2000

June 21, 2000

Dear Member,

I was looking at a list of Days, when nature in some form or other is celebrated. We have eight such days " World Wetland, World Forestry, Earth/Water, World Environment, Vanmahostav, World Habitat, World Biodiversity Conservation and World Conservation Day". They have all become ritualised. The Vanmahostav Day is a classic example. The Forest Minister plants a tree, probably in the same pit in which many of his predecessors planted a sapling. In course of time the sapling, dies and the pit is ready for the next year's Vanmahostav and the next minister. What is required is a target to be completed before the next year's Day comes round. We have made a beginning with this year's Environment Day with the organisation of a Tiger Cell at the Society by the Conservation Sub-Committee. The cell will collect information on the status of the tiger in Western India. Members are requested to send us information on sightings, pug marks, scats seen and any other information with exact location and dates. The cell will, in addition, examine the status of the tiger habitats in Western India. We plan to organise similar programmes for the other "Days".

Pune was one city I visited quite frequently in the last three years, largely because my daughter was stationed there. An added attraction was the many activities generated by the versatile Erach Bharucha, Surgeon, Naturalist, Educationist, who was and is involved in starting medical colleges, hospitals and has more or less single handed built up from the foundation an Environment Education and Research Institute at the Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University at Pune. A man who finds 24 hours of a day hours short for his activities. Pune is an intellectually stimulating city. Another doctor member, Satish Pande and two of his colleagues are writing a book on birds of the Konkan. Usually, if you have seen one bird book you have seen them all, they are so stereotyped, but Satish and his group have a new and entirely innovative approach and I eagerly look forward to seeing the final output. Another book that is being written and illustrated with loving care for detail and presentation is a book on the wild flowers of Sahyadris by Shrikant Ingalhalikar, an engineer member of Pune. It is a matter of regret that my visits to Pune will now be curtailed, for my daughter's husband has been transferred to Jabalpur.

A visit to Madras gave the opportunity to meet the remarkable Doc' Krishnamurthy who had spent a lifetime looking after elephants, both tame and wild. Doc' had recently undergone bypass surgery but was as active as ever. He had been to his beloved jungles

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and their elephants. A situation had arisen where he had either to run or stand and get trampled underfoot by an enraged elephant. He ran and his bypass held, he said, chortling with laughter.

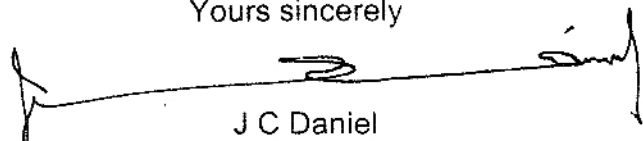
We reminisced about his decade of association with the Society's elephant project at Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary — Ajai Desai, the best Indian field ecologist on elephants but difficult to pin down and have him put his findings on paper. Our trackers who in our decade of studies saw that our raw recruits came through alive and expert on elephant behaviour. How thin was the line between life and death was shown by the accidental death of our best tracker Chenna, who in a moment of inattention ran into a tiger who slapped him, left him with a broken neck and fled. Both the tiger and Chenna had been momentarily careless. We spoke of Dr Bhaskaran, familiarly known as Karadi (=bear), not because he resembled a shaggy sloth bear, he is in fact thin and puny. He had done his M. Phil on the sloth bear and more recently, a study of the sloth bear dens in the Mudumalai National Park for the forest department, who thought dens were not adequate and artificial dens should be provided. Bhaskar investigated and found that existing dens were more than adequate. Bhaskar had been hanging precariously around the fringes of the Society's elephant studies at MNP, having joined at the fag end of the programme. He hung on tenaciously and grimly, in spite of marginal financial support and completed his doctoral programme on the foraging habits of elephants, using the elephants radio collared by the Society. It is gratifying to come across someone who is a committed wildlife biologist. Bhaskar's opinion, which I share, is that our study on elephants at MNP is an unfinished business. Unfortunately, we have now lost his services to another organisation that could offer him a permanent position, and the Society has lost a very valuable asset.

Every year we accumulate over a lakh of cards which is about 25% of the sold quantity. While we write off the cost of these cards in the same year, i.e. surplus is shown after deducting the loss of stock, we do need to dispose of these cards. One suggestion is for members to buy not less than 20 cards at the cost price of Rs. 3/- per card, postage and packing charge extra, which is indeed a bargain. I hope members will take up this offer and help the Society. Card sizes are 5 x 7" and 4.5 x 6". Subjects are of natural history interest.

We plan to hold Strategic Planning Workshops which will look at BNHS' vision, mission and objectives. If you have any suggestions, comments, and opinion to offer, please do write in to me.

*With warm regards*

Yours sincerely



J C Daniel  
Honorary Secretary

# Bombay Natural History Society

Founded 1883

PATRON

SHRI. K.R. NARAYANAN  
PRESIDENT OF INDIA

PRESIDENT

B.G. DESHMUKH  
I.A.S. (Retd.)

Ref. 1658/99

April 19, 1999

Dear Member,

In my last newsletter I had suggested a change of name and with that suggestion I seemed to have carelessly poked a hornet's nest with my writing hand. The majority opinion which was forcefully brought to me was that old is gold and leave it as it is. The younger generation though was for change. We had a similar experience seventeen years ago when the idea of a change was mooted during the Society's Centenary by Dr Sálím Ali and the response from two members is worth quoting:

1. Some years ago the South London Entomological and Natural History Society decided to change its title to the British Entomological and Natural History Society. The change was supported in general by the younger members and opposed by the older, the reasons put forward for the change was that the old title was parochial and that the new one might lead to increased membership and also attract grants from wider selection of institutions. Unfortunately these hopes have not worked out in practice and the Society has lost the advantage of a very old and respected title. The fact that the Society's Headquarters, Library and Collections remained in the old rooms showed that the change of title was only cosmetic.

Exactly the same state of affairs pertains to the Bombay Natural History Society, and I can see no possible advantage coming from a change of title.

— D.G. Sevastopulo, Kenya. 12.10.1982

2. I should like to comment on the President's valid suggestion which I read in a recent issue of Hornbill, namely to change the Society's name. My comments may be too late but here they are!

Much as I agree that the present name is misleading, because the Society's activities extend beyond the geographic region of the Bombay area, I feel that change is not warranted on two accounts.

The Society has built up an international reputation of some significance over the last century, so that by now its activities are known to those involved in wildlife matters. Therefore, there is no real need to change the name in order to explain the Society's geographic scope. (2) If the name were changed to something more general (e.g. Indian Wildlife Society) greater anonymity might result than is the case at present, quite apart from the confusion which would be fostered initially.

— M.J.B. Green, Cambridge, U.K. 9.8.1982

The acronym BNHS which is now in common usage requires to be developed as the acronyms WWF, IUCN, WHO, FAO, etc.

It's always a pleasure to meet members from elsewhere in the country when they visit the Society. One of our members, Mr. M.S. Chettiyapa from Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu had some distressing information on his local environment. Tiruppur is famous for its knitwear, an export oriented industry. It has managed to pollute the waters of the surrounding streams and the groundwater to

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such an extent that livestock cannot be maintained. No one seems to care for the poisoned earth any more.

Another visitor was a young Australian with the unusual name of Sumeda. His grandfather apparently has the largest live Estuarine Crocodile in captivity, a massive eighteen footer. He was looking at skulls of record "Salties" all over the world and was under the impression that we had one. We talked about crocodiles and the world record skull held by the Raja of Kanika at Chandbali in Orissa. I and S.A. Hussain (then at the Society) had visited the Raja, a life member of the Society (as his son is presently) in January 1973, during our visit to Bhitarkanika which the Raja facilitated. I tried vainly to convince him that he should present the 1 metre long record skull to the Society. According to the Raja, when alive, the crocodile was about 8 metres in length. Incidentally, the ratio of skull length to total length is 1:7. The crocodile which was well known as Kalia from its dark skin was a terror over a ten mile stretch of the Dhamra river. It eluded shikaries for over 50 years. When it was finally hit and wounded by a river boat captain, it went ashore among reeds and dry grass where it was burnt to death by villagers. The fact that it was more than five feet longer than crocodiles presently alive gives an idea of its enormous size. Large crocodiles are now extremely rare, having been systematically poached for their skin.

It is not only animals that are endangered but also tribals who had kept themselves away from the mainstream of human society. The formidable Jarawas of the south and middle Andamans who had violently avoided contact with the outside world have had their own reservation since 1957. It was reduced in size in 1970 for colonisation, logging and the Andaman Highway leading to further conflict between Jarawas and settlers. Presently, for some unknown reason, their mood has changed and the Jarawas are visiting nearby villages and towns. The tragedy is, lacking immunity against diseases common to the outside world, the small number of surviving Jarawas will speedily succumb to diseases as did the "Great Andamanese" and the "Onges" tribes, unless timely action is taken to protect them from diseases and exploitation. The Onges, now 101 in number, are reduced to working as bonded labour in plantations. They provide an on-the-spot example of what could happen to the Jarawas unless immediate action is taken to convey our concern to the authorities.

Asad Akhtar, our Conservation Officer, who had recently visited Bastar, reports that the Central Indian race of the Grackle or Hill or Talking Myna is under tremendous pressure from the pet trade and is likely to disappear unless stringent action is taken. A concentrated effort of interested groups is indicated and will be set in motion. Bastar is an area which has been systematically despoiled over the years. When I surveyed the area in 1965 for the Wild Buffalo, it was really wild country with a minimum of roads and people with the urge to develop it. George Schaller and I, from the available signs, believed that there were possibly less than 100 wild buffaloes left. The current forest department estimate is 200+. Optimistic, considering the fact that very few forest officials venture into the wilds because of the Naxalite presence. Whatever is left has to be relocated to safer sanctuaries, a proposal that suffers from the acute lethargy of the State Forest Department. The Bastar wild buffaloes are the only pure strain left of the species.

We recently arranged an orientation programme for new members to make them familiar with the activities of the Society and to meet the staff members with whom they will have to interact. It was an useful exercise in Public Relations and I was particularly pleased as I met an old friend Ivan Valles. Ivan had been a member in the late sixties and early seventies but had dropped off.



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Ivan is an avid surf fisher. I used to accompany him occasionally to the rocky shores of Salsette Island to learn to cast for Rawas as the tide came in. I never did see any fish caught, though Ivan's hands were not long enough to describe the Rawas he had hooked and landed. Usually our trips ended with us sitting in the house of a friendly and hospitable Kohli fisherman eating fried Rawas while Ivan tasted the local IB. Ivan reported that discharge of sludge by ships had badly affected offshore fishing in the recent past, but strict vigil by the coast guard has now improved matters and the fishing has revived. Ivan has a dream of starting surf fishing tourism.

The Society depends on its corpus funds to support its research establishment and other non-financially productive activities such as conservation education, conservation activism, maintenance of its collection, maintenance and updating its library, its electronic data processing and communication system and similar activities and assets. The corpus funds are received through donations from its members and corporate well-wishers. Altruism of its members has been the key to the survival of the Society and to its holdings of invaluable books and collections.

Presently, we have the Sálím Ali Nature Conservation Fund started by Dr Sálím Ali with the Paul Getty Prize for Conservation won by him, which supports conservation activities (25 lakhs). The Sálím Ali Loke Wan Tho Ornithological Research Fund also started by a donation from Dr Sálím Ali which supports research in field ornithology (4 lakhs). The Sálím Ali Memorial Fund which supports technical and scientific staff (25 lakhs). More recently, through the good offices of the President Mr. B.G. Deshmukh, we had received corpus funds of Rs.15 lakhs from ICICI for environmental research and education and from TISCO (20 lakhs) for conservation education, research and awareness. During the current year we have received again through the good offices of the President Rs.50 lakhs from the Tata Educational Trust, of which 35 lakhs is a corpus fund for maintaining controlled temperature for the collections, computerising research data and recruiting additional scientific staff and 15 lakhs for revenue expenditure on environment education activities over a period of three years. The State Bank of India has donated 10 lakhs as a corpus for supporting research projects and activities relating to environment protection and public education.

The support from members for the library has been very generous indeed. I enclose a list of contributions received and action taken. More assistance would be welcome.

The Society has to revise its pay scales to bring it in line with other Institutions with similar objectives and funds are going to be a severe constraint.

I understand Mumbai members occasionally go into the Sanjay Gandhi National Park through the Society's land. I would request them to obtain permission from the forest department for entering the park.

*With warm regards*



J C Daniel  
Honorary Secretary

Encl: As above

## ADOPT A BOOK SCHEME - A BRIEF REPORT

We received a good response towards the 'adopt a book scheme' introduced in the month of November 1998. Till date following books have been adopted. Most of the members have personally visited the library, verified the condition of the books they wish to adopt and the rare books those have been restored. We are thankful to the members who have contributed and showed keen interest in our endeavour.

### DONATIONS RECEIVED UNDER ADOPT A BOOK SCHEME

NAME	BOOK ADOPTED	AMOUNT PAID	STATUS
Shri Y D Joshi, Mumbai	Indian Sporting Birds by Frank Finn. 1915	Rs. 5,000.00	Mended
Mr. Heinz Lainer, Goa	A Monograph of Scansorial Barbets by CHT Marshall, 1871.	Rs.10,000.00	Restored
Mr. & Mrs. M L Brittain, USA	Indian Lions by Charles A Kincaid. 1933	US \$ 200.00 (approx.8000/-)	To be restored
Anonymous Donor, Pune	The Reptiles of China by Clifford H Pope, 1935	Rs.10,000.00	Sent for Restoration
Mr. Aamir Ali, Geneva	FBI - Birds Vol. I & II, EC Stuart Baker, 1890	Rs.10,000.00	To be restored
Lady Y P McNeice	FBI - Birds Vol. III to V, EC Stuart Baker, 1890	Rs.15,000.00	To be restored
Mrs. Piyul Mukherjee	Beasts and Man in India by John Lockwood Kipling. 1892	Rs. 5,000.00	Mended
Mr. V R Pusalkar, Salem	New and Rare Beautiful Leaved Plants by Shirley Hibberd. 1870	Rs. 5,000.00	Mended
M/s. Carborundum Universal Ltd. Chennai	Birds of Asia by John Gould Parts I to VI 1850-54 (Vol. I)	Rs.20,000.00	In favourable condition
M/s Triund Plastics Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai	Game Birds of India, Pakistan, Burma & Ceylon Vol. I to III, by Allan Hume & C.H.T Marshall. 1879-81	Rs.15,000.00	Mended
Dr. (Mrs.) Gaurangi M Das (from ARPS, Meghalaya)	Illustrations of Himalayan Plants by J.D. Hooker. 1855	Rs.15,000.00	To be restored
Mrs. Vijaya Deshmukh	Parrots in Captivity Vol. I to III by WJ Greene, 1884		To be restored
The Serenity Trust	FBI - Birds Vol. VI to VIII, EC Stuart Baker, 1890	Rs.15,000.00	To be restored
-do-	Flora Indica: or Descriptions of Indian Plants by William Roxburgh. 1874	Rs. 5,000.00	Mended
-do-	Beautiful Leaved Plants by E.J. Lowe. 1865	Rs. 5,000.00	Mended
The Sorab Cambatta Trust	A Natural History by William Smellie Vol. I & II, 1866	Rs.10,000.00	To be restored
The Mani Cambatta Trust	Pharmacographia Indica by William Dymock, Vol. I & II 1891	Rs.10,000.00	To be restored

The main purpose of this 'adopt a book scheme' is to generate funds for the library to preserve old and useful books in our possession. Depending on the condition of the book, necessary treatment is given to the book as to rebind, restore the total book, etc. Thus in case the amount donated by a member is not fully utilised, the remaining surplus amount will be kept aside and will be used in the future towards restoration of the same or other books.

Sometimes the Society may have to subsidise, in case the amount required for restoration of a book is more than the amount donated. In such cases, the surplus amount from the adopt a book scheme will be spent by the Society and adjusted. This is also an effort towards involving members of the Society with the precious books of the library and the activities of the Society.

The above books have been restored and the adopter may any time visit the library for its status.

The following list of books are yet to be adopted and restored. We will be grateful if many more members come forward and adopt any of these.

Sr. No.	Titles	Amount Rs.
1.	Birds of Asia by John Gould's Parts VII to XII 1855-60 Parts XIII to XVIII 1861-66 Parts XIX to XXIV 1867-72 Parts XXV to XXX 1873-77 Parts XXXI to XXXV 1869-73	20,000/- 20,000/- 20,000/- 20,000/- 20,000/-
2.	Scenery, Costumes and Architecture Chiefly on the Western Side of India by Robert Grindlay. 1826	20,000/-
3.	Oriental Memoirs, 1- 4 vols. by James Forbes. 1812-13	10,000/- each
4.	Lepidoptera Indica by F. Moore. 9 vols, 1892-1913	5,000/- each
5.	Sport in Eastern Bengal by Frank Simson. 1886	5,000/-
6.	Illustrations of the Forest Flora of Northwest and Central India by Dietrich Brandis. 1874	5,000/-
7.	Western India in 1838-39 Vol. I & II by Mrs. Postans	5,000/- each
8.	Journal of a route across India through Egypt by Lt. Col. Fritzclarence. 1819	10,000/-
9.	Buffon's Natural History by Rev. Hutton. Vol. I & II, 1821	10,000/- each
10.	Illustrations of Indian Botany by Robert Wright. Vol. I & II, 1840	10,000/- each
11.	Fishes of Zanzibar By Leut Col. R L Playfair 1866	10,000/-
12.	Brehm's Zoological Atlas	15,000/-
13.	The Mammals of India by T C Jerdon, 1874	5,000/-
14.	Forest Flora of Bombay Presidency and Sind by W A Talbot 1. Vol. I 1909 2. Vol. II 1911	10,000/- each
15.	Zoology of Egypt - Mammalia by John Anderson, 1902	10,000/-
16.	Plates In Illustration of Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon by Henry Trimen, 1893	20,000/-
17.	Horticultural Illustrations Vol. II & III, 1898	20,000/- each
18.	My Life as an Explorer by Sven Hedin 1926	5,000/-
19.	Familiar Indian Flowers by Lena Lewis 1887	10,000/-
20.	The Museum of Natural History By Richardson, Vol. I to IV 1803 I - Mammalia, II - Birds, III - Reptiles, Fishes, IV - Insects, Mollusca	5,000/- each
21.	European Butterflies and Moths by WF Kirby, 1898	10,000/-
22.	A General History of Birds by John Latham Vol. I & II, 1821	5,000/- each
23.	Bombay and Western India by James Douglas Vol. I & II 1893	5,000/- each

# Bombay Natural History Society

Founded 1883

PATRON

SHRI. K.R. NARAYANAN  
PRESIDENT OF INDIA

PRESIDENT

B.G. DESHMUKH  
I.A.S. (Retd.)

Ref. 694/99

February 18, 1999

Dear Member,

Sylvan Lodge on the bank of the Periyar river at Kodanad in Kerala is one of the dream forest bungalows foresters used to build in the past. Situated in a small enclave of evergreen forest of magnificent tall mohogany and other trees it is an island of peace. I spent two days or to be precise two nights in it in between visits to the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary at Thattekad. The first evening some one threw a stick of dynamite into the Periyar attracting a swam of River Terns which picked up the smaller fishes while the dynamiters picked up the larger. Undoubtedly this is the modern method of fishing practised all over India. Dr. Sugathan who was with me during the trip and who has been studying the fauna of Thattekad over the last three years related how a forest patrol he was with, cornered a party of "dynamite" fishers. The group threw the dynamite sticks into the water and fled but not before some of them had been identified. The dynamite was handed over to the police, who cannily passed back three of the sticks to the dynamiters thus assuring themselves of a good supply of fish, on the sound assumption that two sticks of dynamite are as good as five sticks for filing a charge sheet. The case was filed with a well thought out "inadvertent error" in the name of the father of one of the culprits. The father, a well known fish poacher, had been a bedridden paralytic for some years. The defense to the well feigned chagrin of the police had no difficulty in proving that the accused could not have been seen with the dynamite. Case dismissed.

To get back to Sylvan Lodge, in the silence of the night, I was seranaded by a pair of what I believe were Forest Eagle Owls. The male had a sonorous, somewhat pompous sounding, "hoo" call, responded to with a more mellow "hoo" by the female. They conversed thus off and on in the night. The female sometimes asserted herself by not responding promptly and the distraught male had to 'hoo' repeatedly before she replied. I was sorry I did not have recording equipment with me for the dueting owls offered, excellent opportunities for recording their calls, the silence of the night was so perfect, I was reminded of the bird call cassette we have in the making. Based on calls recorded many years ago by B.C.R. Bertram on the Nagra tape recorder donated to the Society by the late Dato Loke Wan Tho, a close friend and associate of Dr. Salim Ali, supplemented by calls recorded by the late Br. Navarro of St. Xavier's School, Mumbai and Dr. Erach Bharucha who also assembled the calls. The tapes offer a mixed bag of calls of varying quality from the nasal haggling of whitebacked vultures over a kill to the melodius song of the shama. Recorded in the field, the background has calls of other birds and natural sounds hard to filter without affecting the calls. The calls of 169 species recorded in two audio tapes will be available to members by end-April.

Members involvement in species conservation largely relates to the glamorous species like the tiger. Riding on the back of the tiger does draw attention and the more outrageous the statement of concern the more the publicity. I was, therefore, pleasantly surprised when a group of four members took up the cause of the conservation of the all but unknown Wroughton's Free-tailed

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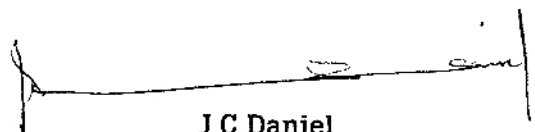
bat. An obscure, ugly as sin species, whose world population is at the moment confined to a single cave in Karnataka. The members Messrs D Kasbekar, V. Madhav, V. Dongre and Ms T. Dhulla had been quietly and efficiently drawing the attention of the State and Central Governments to the urgent need for conservation of the bat's habitat. I came to know of their efforts only when they asked for an introductory letter to the Chief Wildlife Warden whom they planned to meet to convey the Society's concern. I wish more members would concern themselves with the conservation of species whose extinction is more probable than the tiger's or the elephant's before their habitats and they are swept away into oblivion without anyone being the wiser.

Members may recall that in the recent past we had been trying to get members in centres other than Mumbai to be involved in natural history activities in their immediate surroundings. I am happy to advise that it has taken root at Ahmedabad where members met under the auspices of the Centre for Environmental Education. The Director, Mr. Kartikeya Sarabhai, and Education Officer, Ms Lima Rosalind, and Dr. Urfi of "Sundervan" are members of the Society. More than 60 members were present and Mr. Isaac Kehimkar, PRO of the Society participated and gave a talk on butterflies. An exhibition of wildlife photographs by a member, Mr Hemendra Shah, was also inaugurated by Mr. Sarabhai. Mr Rajan Harivallabhdas, an active member of Ahmedabad who recently donated a lakh of rupees to the Society suggests that while members would be able to look after local costs, a fund be established at the Society from donations such as his to enable the Society to depute lecturers and specialists to speak or organise activities for members at other centres. I hope members elsewhere in India would contribute to such a fund to enable the Society to actively spread the message of conservation of our natural history resources.

In a recent correspondence we had with our local MP he would have us change our name to Mumbai Natural History Society. We advised the MP that though our name is parochial, the membership of the Society is all India and international and in the change of the name all the membership has a say. The Society's Registration Act also has certain stringent conditions. A name that has identified an organisation for 115 years has to be conserved as it identifies the Society and not its location.

However, it is time as we move into the next Millenium to consider how best to express the all India nature of the Society. Members may recall that earlier on I had suggested introducing a name which would express the Society's all India nature. I have given a format for a new letterhead if the membership is agreeable to an all embracing name without making any change to our registered name. Please let me have your views so that I can place them before the Executive Committee for their consideration.

The Executive Committee of the Society would like to have your E-mail address if you have one. The Society's E-mail address is: [bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in](mailto:bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in). My E-mail address is: [jayd@bom5.vsnl.net.in](mailto:jayd@bom5.vsnl.net.in). May I remind members that transparencies for calendars must be received by us by 31st March, 1999.



**J C Daniel  
Honorary Secretary**

# Bombay Natural History Society

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Ref. No. 5000/2001

28<sup>th</sup> December 2001

Dear Member,

## Election to the Executive Committee For the years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004

As you are aware, a new Executive Committee for the years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 for the Society has to be constituted. For this Committee, as against 12 members who are to be elected in terms of Rules 33 and 34 nominations have been received for 20 members, all duly proposed and seconded.

1. To enable you to cast your vote in favour of 12 out of 20 candidates, we enclose:
  - i) The Bio-data as supplied by the candidates.
  - ii) The Ballot Paper containing the names of the 20 candidates, arranged in alphabetical order. Please indicate your preference for a maximum of 12 candidates with (x) marks against the names of the candidates you wish to be elected, in the space specified. **Papers with more than 12 cross marks will be invalid. You should not sign on the ballot paper.**
  - iii) Two covers.
2. Please put the Ballot paper duly marked into the smaller cover provided. Append your name and signature and membership number on the cover and put it into the envelope addressed to BNHS; seal the envelope and post.
3. **Please note that any Ballot paper not conforming to the above requirements will be considered invalid.**
4. Please ensure that the Ballot Paper reaches us on or before 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2002.
5. The counting of the Ballot Papers will begin at 9.30 a.m. on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2002 at Hornbill House, Mumbai. The candidates may, if they so desire, be present during the counting.

J C Daniel  
Honorary Secretary

Encl: 4

**ELECTION FOR BNHS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
2002-2003 AND 2003-2004**

**BIODATA OF CANDIDATES**

**1. Dr Ashok M. Bhagwat**

Ex.Vice-Principal, Jhunjhunwala College; Director, C.B. Patel Research Centre. Life member, BNHS past 24 years. Member EC four terms. Served as Honorary Secretary & Chairman, Research & Collection Sub-Committee and Member of other Committees. Students successfully guided 25. Research papers 80. Areas of interest Wildlife Physiology, Biochemical Taxonomy, Genetics, Stress physiology.

**2. Dr Erach K. Bharucha**

A longstanding Member of the BNHS and its Executive Committee. Interests include conservation, photography, Environment education and awareness. Worked on Conservation projects, reports, books and papers. Presently Director, BVIEER, Pune. Developed Birdcall cassettes for the BNHS. Presently producing a CDROM on Biodiversity. Worked on Government Committees, WWF, SACON, WII.

**3. Dr. Bharat Bhushan**

Director, Centre for Environment and Development, (Yashada), Government of Maharashtra, Pune, Associate Professor, Environmental Planning. M.Sc. & Ph.D. (Field Ornithology), BNHS. M.Sc. (Great Indian Bustard,) Ph.D (Ornithology of Eastern Ghats). 1982-1992 Scientist and Conservation Officer, BNHS. 1992-1993 Rediscovered Jerdon's Courser. State Coordinator, Maharashtra Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

**4. Dr. B. F. Chhapgar**

Marine biologist. Former Curator, Taraporevala Aquarium. Mumbai University Postgraduate research guide. Author of nine popular books on aquatic wildlife and Hornbill's Seashore Lore series. Co-editor, "Salim Ali's India" (profit to BNHS Rs.17/-lakhs). On Board of Governors, Maharashtra Nature Parks Society. BNHS Executive Committee member for six terms.

**5. Mr. B.C. Choudhury**

Scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India. Herpetologist and wetland scientist of repute. He was responsible for the successful crocodile conservation programme and presently leads the marine turtle conservation programme. He has initiated the successful countrywide Sarus Crane count programme and is a life member of the BNHS.



**6. Mr J C Daniel**

Honorary Secretary 1997 onwards, Curator/Director 1960-1991; Ph.D. Research Guide; BNHS Executive Editor, JBNHS since 1965; Founder Editor Hornbill; Member IBWL and Standing Committee, Project Elephant Steering Committee; Governing Council SACON. Authored Reptile Book, revised Bird Book, compiled books on Leopard, Elephant, Tiger. Awarded Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar 1997.

**7. Mr. Debi Goenka**

Actively involved with Conservation Issues since 1975-protection of Borivili National Park, Radhanagari and Melghat Sanctuaries, Mangrove ecosystems; and declaration of Murud-Janjira, Dahanu, Mahableshwar and Matheran as ecologically sensitive areas. Initiated number of wildlife raids. Member of Maharashtra Wildlife Advisory Board, and Bombay High Court Committees for SGNP and Vehicular Pollution.

**8. Dr. Ashok Kothari**

Practicing Doctor, Chairman - Library Sub-Committee. Initiated restoration of books, organised exhibitions of rare books on Indian Wildlife and raised huge amount by co-editing **Salim Ali's India**. Organised nature camps, planted thousands of Indigenous trees. President - Rotary Club of Bombay Seacoast. Initiated Rotary Project of presenting BNHS publications to libraries.

**9. Dr. Dilip N. Mahadik**

Principal of a degree college in Mumbra is Ph.D in Zoology with a thesis on "Effects of heavy metal Cadmium on marine pistol shrimp". As a N.C.C commissioned Officer had many years of administrative experience. Also involved in civil defense, first aid, nature club training programmes & social activities.

**10. Mr. R.K. Makharia**

Field Experience: Member since 15 years. Participated several Himalayan and Wildlife outings. Co-group leader to Valley of Flowers and Chopta. Trekked to Auli, Chardhams, Panwalikanta, Khatling Glacier, etc. Trekked over 200 km to Kailash Mansarovar. Administrative Experience: Businessman. Past President Junior Chamber and PSI Mumbai. Interests: Photography, trekking, travelling.

**11. Maj. Madhav Mhaskar (Retd.)**

An ex-army officer of Air Defence Artillery Corps, M.Sc (Geology), active member of BNHS for last 10 years, led several nature treks, conducted slide shows/lectures on nature related topics for members, active participation in the conservation efforts for Bhimgad Project, Madei & Netravali Wildlife Sanctuaries. Worked on the Programme Sub-Committee.

**12. Mr Sunjoy G. Monga**

Independent naturalist working on nature-education and documentation. Much concerned with children's programmes and environmental issues. Deeply involved with BNHS Membership activities; Co-Editor Hornbill. Writer, photographer for many publications. Author-photographer of book on Mumbai's National Park. Chairperson, Education Sub-Committee. Believe earnestly in BNHS' immense potential for present and future.

**13. Mr. Rishad Naoroji**

Independent researcher specializing in raptor conservation. BNHS Research Associate. Three years studies on Rajpipla (Gujarat) raptors resulted in the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. Avid photographer. Photographs published nationally and internationally. Articles and papers published in numerous magazines, fourteen in JBNHS. Completed handbook on Birds of prey of the Indian subcontinent. Project Co-ordinator for Parsi Vulture Project.

**14. Mr. Bishwarup Raha**

Honorary Wildlife Warden Nashik District, Founder President Nature Conservation Society of Nashik, Maharashtra Co-ordinator-IBCN, Environment conservation activist, Field worker for conservation awareness and education, wildlife researcher and nature photographer. Since childhood he is with nature by undertaking annual excursions, treks and study tours to wilderness areas for past three decades.

**15. Mr. Ulhas Rane**

Architect specialised in Environmental Landscape Design, Sustainable Development, Heritage Conservation. Senior faculty - Bangalore/Mumbai University. Designed Zoological, Botanical, Nature Parks, Education Centres. Active Conservationist over 25 years, involved in Soil/Water Conservation, Nature Education. Convenor - Save Sahyadri Movement. Ex-Honorary Secretary, Presently EC Member in Bangalore initiating involvement of outstation members.

**16. Ms Rachel Reuben**

Life Member. Special interest insects and birds. Entomologist with 35 years research experience in taxonomy, biology and ecology of disease bearing mosquitoes. Developed and tested ecofriendly methods for their control. Published over 100 research papers, and popular articles on natural history in **Hornbill**. Served on Research Conservation and other subcommittees of the BNHS.

**17. Mr. Kishor D. Rithe**

Member of the Maharashtra State Wildlife Advisory Board and founder- member of the Nature Conservation Society of Amravati. Actively involved in wildlife conservation for the last 12 years, he is working to save the tigers of the Satpura region and is particularly active in the Melghat Tiger Reserve.

**18. Ms. Katie Rustomjee**

Graduate, Secretarial Diploma, Arts Diploma. Worked for Tatas and CibaGeigy. Committee member Litigants Forum, World Zoroastrian Organisation, People-To-People, Bihar School of Yoga, Tourism Council. Touring to various unknown places, love for Nature, Environment, Music. Have been with BNHS for many years. Also belong to WWF, Explorers, Himalayan Club.

**19. Mr. Bittu Sahgal**

The Editor of Sanctuary Magazine and a member of the Indian Board for Wildlife and the Maharashtra Wildlife Advisory Board, he is working to save the tiger. He believes that the BNHS, India's premier natural history organisation, has a destiny to fulfill in guiding and leading India's conservation movement.

**20. Dr. V S Vijayan**

Director, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History since 1991; Principal Scientist, BNHS Bharatpur project 1981-1991; head, Wildlife Biology Division KFRI 1976-1981; Visiting Scientist, Indian Institute of Science 1975; SALOR Fellow BNHS 1971-1975; Ph.D. under Salim Ali; Research Assistant, BNHS Bird Migration Project 1969-1971; Member BNHS Executive Committee 2000 - 2002.

# Bombay Natural History Society

Founded 1883

Ref.No. 1698/2000

17<sup>th</sup> April 2000

Dear Member,

The Society's management starts a new term with a new Executive Committee for the new Millennium. Our policy will continue to be conservation oriented study of natural history largely focussed on the conservation of the basic structure of the habitat, the prevention of pollution of water and poisoning of the land, rehabilitation of degraded land and reducing human pressure on protected areas.

The President, Mr. B. G. Deshmukh, and I attended the formal inauguration of the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) at Anaikatty, Coimbatore on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2000 by Mr. T.R. Ballu, Minister for Environment and Forests, Government of India. SACON is the sixth Research Institute to be set up after Independence largely focussed on wildlife biology, a subject which only the BNHS had addressed from preindependence days. Apart from SACON, they are Madhav Gadgil's Centre for Ecological Research at the Indian Institute of Science, The Wildlife Institute of India, The Centre for Wildlife Science at the Aligarh Muslim University, The Kerala Forest Research Institute and the Salim Ali School of Ecology at Pondicherry. Only Madhav Gadgil has succeeded in producing outstanding scientists such as Raghavendra Gadagkar, Ranjit Daniels, and R. Sukumar. Not that there are no other outstanding scientists; there are several, but not products of a single Institute. None of the others, including the BNHS, has measured up to that level of excellence. Let us hope SACON will keep its levels high and achieve them.

The Courts appear to be the last resort for conservation of our natural resources. I am happy to advise that the Society has now started a legal aid fund, the **Justice D E Reuben Legal Aid Fund** with a corpus of Rs. 2.25 lakhs donated by his three daughters. Justice D. E. Reuben ICS, retired as Chief Justice of the Patna High Court and settled in Bombay. A close friend of Salim Ali and Humayun Abdulali, he was a member of the Society's Executive Committee from 1954 and rendered sterling service to the Society in the editing of its publications, including the *Journal*. It was his suggestion that the Society's new premises be named Hornbill House. His tradition of service to the Society is being continued by his daughter Dr Rachel Reuben, who is a member of some of the Sub-Committees of the Executive committee and will chair the Legal Aid Sub-Committee. The fund will be used for conservation related litigations at the discretion of the BNHS. It will also extend help to forest officials falsely charged with misdemeanour by interested parties. Contributions to the fund are welcome.

Another Corpus fund that has been set up is the **Naoroji Hornbill Fund** started with an initial donation of Rs. 1 lakh by Rishad Naoroji, to help us in the publication of the **Hornbill**. We hope the Corpus will increase from donations to support the increasing cost of producing the **Hornbill**.

We thank the members who gave donations to the general funds of the Society and specifically for the Bus or for the Conservation Fund. But the donation that went straight to my heart was the donation of Rs. 1000/- made by Mr Vilas Shingre towards garlanding Dr Salim Ali's portrait on Dr Salim Ali's birthday. Thank you Sir.

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Tel.: 282 1811 • Fax: (91 - 22) 283 7615 • Gram: HORNBILL  
E-mail Numbers - Office: bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in  
Director: bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in

Speaking of donations brings me to the other side of the coin. Recently we had arranged a visit to sanctuaries in the South, a 15 day programme which brought abundant praise and abundant brickbats! One member went to the extent of writing to me that the Society was being "furtive" with its accounts. The Society does run these camps on a no profit no loss basis. If it had not been so, we would not be running around with our hats out for funds to buy a new bus. It is my invariable practice to carry a sheet, (additional one to go under the blanket if I am visiting a cold place), an air pillow and a towel when I use forest rest houses and hotels in smaller towns for the linen is hardly ever changed. One must be prepared to rough it out. We do try and make things as comfortable as possible. Wild country is not usually comfortable country.

Members can help the Society by persuading their friends and their friends and the friends of friends **ad infinitum** to become members of the Society. It has been agreed that those who bring in more than 50 members during the current year will be felicitated and given an Award at the next AGM.

In the second fortnight of March I was in the South again in the company of Drs Balachandran and Bhaskaran, looking for a site for a permanent bird banding camp with the urgency of a turtle searching for a nesting beach. We landed up in the office of Mr Udayan, the Wildlife Warden of Anaimalai and Grass Hill National Parks. Incidentally, Udayan, P.C. Tyagi, Niraj Kumar, Barua of the Tamil Nadu cadre, Nitin Kakodkar of the Maharashtra cadre and I am sure many others of the younger generation of forest officers in the country, if they are left without political interference, will see to it that our protected areas are protected indeed. Curiously, forest departments have now become top heavy. There was a time when forest officers like K P Karamchandani of the Gujarat cadre and K K Nair of the Kerala cadre as Chief Conservators of Forests ran what the Navy calls a tight ship. Now it seems there are more Principal Chief Conservators of forests than there are forests to conserve. At the rate at which Principal Chief Conservators of forests are proliferating, there will come a time when there will be only Generals, no Privates.

To get back to our search we went to the Grass Hills National Park along a perilously narrow road in an Armada, not the Spanish Armada, but Mahindra's. The person who thought up the name for this comfortable avatar of the Jeep should have his/her brain serviced. The road twists and turns and climbs through some of the most magnificent scenery in the Western Ghats, till you come to the rolling grassy downs. The sanctuary is a fantastic natural wilderness inspite of the occasional patches of pine planted in the past by the forest department. There is an ugly firebreak around one of the larger sholas. How did the sholas survive thousands of years without the assistance of the forest department?

A study of the grassland shola ecosystem will be launched shortly by the Society with funding by the Fish & Wildlife Service of the USA and collaboration of the State and Central Governments.

Three experiences during the visit stand out. Our stay at the Chinchona Plantation rest house at Valparai made remarkably pleasant by the two Malabar Whistling Thrushes who roosted under the eaves of the wooden bungalow built in 1925. They serenaded us in the evening with their rambling melodious whistle and woke us up at 2.30 in the morning, whistling our sleep away.

The second experience was the trashing of the beautiful Talekona Gorge. The Gorge situated 55 km from Tirupati with its evergreen riverine forest and isolated fauna of giant squirrels and flying lizards is a national heritage. Its condition is appalling, with unlimited garbage and the river murky with filth.

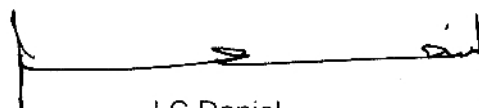
The third experience was the visit to Kodaikanal with Balachandran, and two members of the Society, Arvind, an excellent agricultural scientist, very knowledgeable on bird trappers and traps and Kumaran Sathasivam, a Madras IIT graduate who plans to digitize the 97 volumes of the Society's Journal. The highlight of our trip to Kodaikanal was the visit to the Sholai School.

Brian Jenkins, an extraordinarily innovative follower of J Krishnamurthy's philosophy, runs the school which teaches, in addition to other disciplines, organic agriculture and Appropriate Technology. It is entirely self sufficient in its energy needs with its 55 Solar Panels and two Micro Hydro-Electric Plants, a wind generator and a Biogas Plant. An experience in self sufficiency.

Kodaikanal was the last of our search visits and unfortunately coming down to the plains I had a rather frightening experience of a disease which afflicts old men. Though the problem resolved itself, I was reminded that fear is not a remedy by the Arabic story first brought to the attention of the western world by Somerset Maugham in his play *Sheppye* and later given as a preface to his book *Appointment in Samarra* by the American author John O' Hara, and more recently as the first story in his new collection of short stories *To cut a long story short* by Jeffrey Archer. The story *Death Speaks* is so beautifully scripted that I cannot resist sharing it with you.

"There was a merchant in Baghdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, Master, just now when I was in the market-place I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture; now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me. The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the market-place and he saw me standing in the crowd and he came to me and said, why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning? That was not a threatening gesture, I said, it was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra".

With warm regards



J C Daniel  
Honorary Secretary

## Can such letter campaigns make a difference?

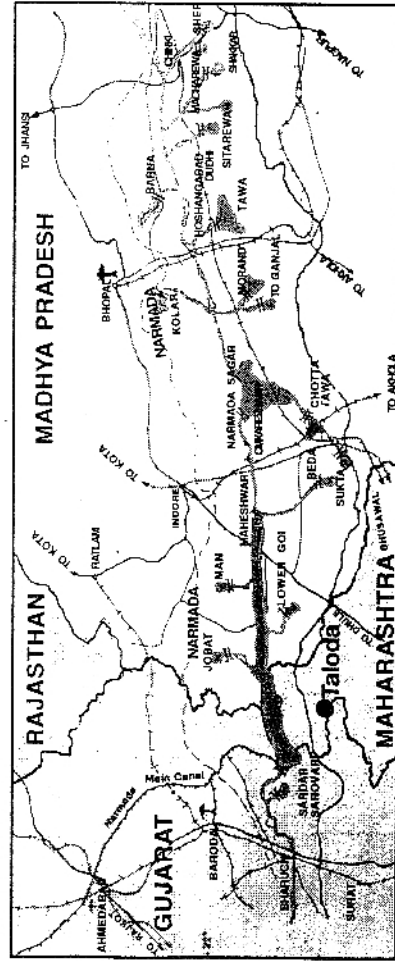
Yes they can. For every letter that politicians or newspaper editors receive, they knows that ten more people feel the same way. This is how public opinion is created. A little effort on your part can thus go a long way since it will be part of a much larger BNHS members' campaign. Remember to be brief and polite.

The *Bombay Natural History Society* has always been at the forefront of the conservation movement in India. It was with Dr. Salim Ali's help that the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi was persuaded to stop the Silent Valley Dams that threatened the habitat of the Liontailed Macaque. Help us carry on his tradition.

Apart from writing the letters as suggested in this action alert, you could also help support the BNHS by donating money. Cheques may be drawn favouring THE BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY, CONSERVATION FUND.

If you have any conservation issues you would like attention drawn to, write to us at the Conservation Subcommittee, BNHS.

*All donations are eligible for tax exemption under Sec. 80 G. For further information write to: The BNHS Conservation Subcommittee, Hornbill House, Salim Ali Chowk, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400 023. Fax: +91-22-2837615, Email: <bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in>*



## EXISTING AND PROPOSED RESERVOIRS

**TAKE ACTION NOW!**

**Taloda: Forest Spotted owl  
Athene blewitti, one of the world's  
rarest owlets, in danger as the  
Maharashtra government threatens  
to deforest its habitat in North  
Dhule.**



*Bombay Natural History Society  
Conservation Subcommittee*



## BACKGROUND

The forests of Taloda and Shahada in northern Maharashtra shot into prominence in 1997 with the rediscovery of the Forest Spotted Owllet *Athene blewetti*, thought to be extinct for over a century. Before its rediscovery, no definite record of the species had been obtained since 1884. Surveys have since established that a precarious population currently exists in the Taloda forests.

That the bird is rare or confined to very localised habitats is obvious, as it's habit of perching conspicuously during the late morning, make sightings relatively easy. Of the seven specimens of Forest Spotted Owllet ever collected, five were from the Shahada and Taloda areas. The presence of the bird in the hills and valleys of Taloda was reconfirmed by a Bombay Natural History Society field survey conducted in 1998.

## IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION

A crepuscular, diurnal bird, the Forest Owllet, lives in dry deciduous forests interspersed with shrubs and grasses. Its habitat in Taloda is already under pressure from illicit timber felling and clearing of forests for agriculture.

There is a need for intensive surveys to be conducted of all reported and suspected *blewetti* habitats. Existing

sites such as Taloda, therefore, need to be strictly protected if the owllet is to be saved.

Unfortunately, some departments of the Maharashtra government seem to be oblivious to the fate of the Forest Owllet. They are in the process of destroying the forests of Taloda, which they have identified as one of the rehabilitation sites for oustees (development refugees) of the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) dam being built across the Narmada river in Gujarat. The government has asked for 1,500 ha. of forest land in five villages of Taloda. Thousands of trees have been marked for felling. The influx of oustees will take a toll of still more and will ruin one of the few remaining habitats for the owllet.

## RECIPE FOR DISASTER

● The SSP proposes to submerge 6,488 ha. of forest land in Maharashtra alone. In addition, an area of 4,200 ha. of forest land in Maharashtra, (2,700 ha. in Taloda and 1,500 in nearby Akkalkuwa) has already been given over for the resettlement of villagers displaced by the dam.

● The conditional environmental clearance given to the Sardar Sarovar Project on June 24, 1987, explicitly stated that no forest land

was to be diverted for rehabilitation.

● Tribal families already living on the land earmarked for resettlement justifiably fear that newcomers will usurp their limited forest produce. They have consequently started clearing patches of forest land at an accelerated rate.

● At a meeting between the Sardar Sarovar Rehabilitation Authorities and local activists, in Taloda on March 29, 2000 it was established that the official figures on file were erroneous and that there was virtually no unencumbered land in the given area that was available for resettlement. At least 136 families from among those already displaced have not been given possession of land.

● We have reason to believe that information has been presented to the Supreme Court by the Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra governments. On the basis of this information, the people of the Narmada valley and the forests and the wildlife of the surrounding areas are being sacrificed for a project that has no hope of being economically viable.

The Bombay Natural History Society opposes the diversion of forest land for the resettlement of people displaced by dams or other mega-projects, as this sets an extremely bad precedent that could pave the way for a torrent of similar demands by State Governments all over India.

Please write polite letters protesting the proposed diversion of the Taloda forest lands for the SSP resettlement to:

*Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee,  
Hon. Prime Minister,  
Chairman, Indian Board for Wildlife,  
South Block, New Delhi – 110 001.*

*Shri Vilasrao Deshmukh,  
Hon. Chief Minister,  
Government of Maharashtra,  
Mantralaya, Mumbai*

Include the following points:

● The Forest Owllet is extremely rare and its few remaining habitats such as Taloda need to be strictly protected from any disturbance.

● India's forests are rapidly being destroyed and the diversion of forest land for resettling project-affected people sets a dangerous precedent.

● The respective state governments have not been able to find revenue land to resettle and rehabilitate all those affected by the Sardar Sarovar project. Therefore, in the interests of social and environmental justice, the project cannot be allowed to proceed.

*Send copies to the Conservation Subcommittee, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Dr. Salim Ali Chowk, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400 023.*

# Bombay Natural History Society



Founded 1883

Ref.No. 4829/99

12<sup>th</sup> October 1999

Dear Member,

We wrote two letters from the Society to the Prime Minister concerning matters of urgent conservation interest, the protection of the coral reef of the Marine National Park in the Gulf of Mannar and the Marine National Park in the Gulf of Kutch. Both are now gravely threatened, for official vandalism has now waded into the sea. The proposed Sethu Samudrum Project will surely destroy the Marine National Park in Mannar and the BORL Pipelines will remain a constant danger to the Marine National Park in Gujarat. The letters disappeared into the PM's office like stones dropped into a bottomless well. Both are projects of political expediency, all the BJP's allies in Tamil Nadu have sworn eternal fidelity to the BJP for the Central Government's support for the project that the PM pronounced. To express our sorrow, one can only paraphrase King Lear's lament.

"As flies to wanton boys  
are we to the Gods,  
they kill us for their votes"

I enclose a copy each of the letters I wrote to the PM. Could you please post them to the PM in support of the Society's stand. Perhaps an appeal from about five thousand conservationists may have some effect. The Wildlife Protection Society has offered to take the matter to the courts if provided with accurate data.

The only remedy one has for saving what is left of our wilderness area, whether in the sea or on land, are the laws that protect them. We are fortunate in their quality but in their application we are handicapped. Take the case of the Onge tribals of the Andamans. A public interest litigation has been filed, but to conduct the case on the Island from the mainland costs money, even though the lawyers are working without fee. NGO's notoriously lead a hand to mouth existence. If we don't find them money the Onges will disappear. The Jarawas are next in line. You may recall that in an earlier letter I had written that they had forsaken their self-imposed isolation and started moving into "civilised" areas. The result — an epidemic of measles. Unless all the 300 or so of them can be immunised against the common ailments that affect the rest of the world, they are doomed to extinction.

A legal aid fund has now become essential and any contributions that members can make towards building up such a fund would be most welcome. We have been assured by a member of substantial contribution for a corpus to such a fund.

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E-mail Numbers - Office: bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in  
Director: bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in

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From time to time I have written about the disappearance of vultures. We held a workshop at Mumbai to determine the causes for their disappearance. No convincing reason was evident, the possibility of a contagious disease seemed to be very plausible. What was very distressing was that a leading ornithologically oriented institution did not participate. The BNHS does not hold any proprietary rights on vultures or any other form of life, and we sincerely hope that others will also share our belief in the need for unity.

You may recall that a group of our members had been instrumental in the establishment of two sanctuaries to save the rain forests of Goa. To take matters further, Mr Kasbekar submitted a project through the BNHS to the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research and was to have undertaken the project on a sabbatical from his job. He had to abandon the project as he was threatened with death by the mining and timber lobbies of Goa, if he ever entered Goa and its forests. It is time we paid tribute to this core group of active members, Durgesh Kasbekar, Vishveshwar Madhav, Tejal Dhulla, Sharmila Kasbekar, Maj. Madhav Mhaskar, Vrushal Dongre, Amogh Gharsas and John Manjali who, over a period of 52 months, gave presentations and had discussions with a wide range of politicians and officials ranging from the Union Minister for Environment and Forests and the Karnataka Minister of Forests, the Lt. Governor of Goa, the local M.P. and the forest officials of the Central and State governments, officials at places as far distant as Dehra Dun and Chennai — all at their own expense — and succeeded in establishing two sanctuaries Maide (208 sq.km) and Netravati (211 sq.km) in Goa, and arranging the process of declaration of the Bhimgad Sanctuary 550 sq.km. in Karnataka. They will be felicitated at the coming Annual General Meeting of the Society.

A welcome visitor to the office was Ravi Sankaran, former employee and student of the Society, presently an ornithologist at SACON. Ravi, since he joined SACON, has been doing commendable work on the Narcondam Hornbill, the Nicobar Megapode and the Edible Nest Swiftlet. On the latter he is to try captive breeding to ease the pressure on the wild population. There is indeed a touch of excellence in whatever he does. Ravi was on his way back from his status survey of the Lesser Florican, a species which was the subject of his doctoral thesis and which is presently well on the road to extinction. The prospects of its survival are gloomy, a species whose breeding is closely interlinked with monsoon and grasslands. He had sighted only about 300 or 10% of the existing population. Unless we can, through satellite telemetry, establish their non-breeding winter habitats, their conservation will remain a lost cause. Asad Rahmani had also joined Ravi in his survey and both had spread the message of conservation of the bustards and floricans in the desert districts of Rajasthan and Gujarat by posters, personal contacts, and meetings. Let's hope the grasslands and the bustards will survive.

The past does pop up pleasantly and most unexpectedly as it did in the visit of Lawrie Nogueira to the office. Lawrie, now in his early eighties, was a preparator and skinner from the time the Society built the Natural History Section of the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay. Lawrie was an incomparable 'fixer' especially where food to support his Falstaffian figure was concerned. He could even establish channels with Dr. Sâlim Ali's cooks in the field so that we could, with full stomach, smugly meet the challenge of the paper-thin chappaties which came on the table. He had a fund of somewhat ribald stories about the high and mighty, like the Viceroy's hunt where he had been sent by the Society to skin the tiger that would be shot by the Viceroy (the Society's Patron). A tiger had been baited and anchored for about three months to await its

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encounter with its august hunter. The day before the hunt, Lawrie related with roars of laughter, the Viceroy had carelessly sat on a log in the forest and ticks had got in amongst what Lawrie euphemistically called the Viceroy's family jewels and immediate medical attention was required. The hunt was called off and the tiger escaped with its skin.

We have now replicated the bird call cassettes, the first lot of 500 sets having been sold out. This time it is a digital recording and with many of the earlier glitches removed. We had a mixed reaction to the bird calls. Some members were disappointed that all the calls of a bird were not recorded, others at the varying quality of different calls of the same species. These are unavoidable as they are field and not studio recordings and we can record only what we hear. What made us happy was the appreciation from Prof. Becking of Amsterdam who works largely on bird calls.

Mr. Vivek Sinha who has been so far known only for his excellence in photography, has now written a book on his encounters with wildlife in India. An extremely well produced book, illustrated with his superb photographs, its worth the Rs.395/- cover price (Rs.355/- to members if bought from the Society).

If you have any books on natural history written in the last century or the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Library Sub-Committee would be happy to receive them.

This is the last letter of the Millennium, let us hope that the Hon. Secretary who writes to the members at the end of the next Millennium will write to at least a million members. Surely a modest hope.

With Warm regards and all best  
Wishes for the new year  
and  
the new Millennium



J C Daniel  
Honorary Secretary

**Note:** When you send your subscription please spell out your name, signature on cheques leave us completely baffled.

# **DENOTIFICATION ALERT**

## **Request for Information**

A significant number of protected areas in India are proposed to be partially or fully denotified/deleted, as part of the ongoing settlement of people's rights (subsequent to a Supreme Court order requiring state governments to do the settlement). This is due to variety of reasons, including:

- 1) The mistaken belief that people cannot be allowed to stay inside PAs, although there is a provision under the Wildlife Act to permit the continuation of rights in sanctuaries.
- 2) For industrial/commercial activities.

There are even cases where governments have denotified areas for commercial purposes, using people's rights as an excuse. In a majority of PAs, denotification/deletion is only going to encourage the entry of powerful commercial forces, which will benefit neither wildlife nor local communities.

Specific information on which PAs in each state are affected is urgently needed to get a complete national picture. We will put this information together, so that it can be used for a national campaign, lobbying and legal action, to halt this dangerous trend. Please send any information (with copies to BNHS) you have on this issue or address further queries to:

Mr Ashish Kothari/Pankaj Sekhsaria  
Kalpavriksh  
Apt. # 5, Shree Dutta Krupa                      OR  
908 Deccan Gymkhana  
Pune - 411 004.  
Tel/Fax: (020) 565 4239  
Email:ashish@nda.vsnl.net.in

Mr. J.C. Daniel  
Hon. Secretary  
BNHS  
Tel: (022) 282 1811  
Fax: (022) 283 7616  
Email:bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in

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The Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India has constituted a task force for rationalisation of boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries. The task force welcomes suggestions and inputs from Members of the Public living in and around National Parks and Sanctuaries. You may write to the Hon. Secretary, BNHS with your suggestions, which can be forwarded to the regional task forces of the Ministry.